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Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda
Matters relating to science and review
Research and systematic observation

Report on the further enhancement of the availability and visibility of scientific information relevant to the Convention on the UNFCCC website

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, at its fortieth session, requested the secretariat to further enhance the availability and visibility of scientific information, including through social media, the UNFCCC E-Newsletter and the calendar of science events, and by integrating scientific information available on the Internet from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other relevant stakeholders. This report provides a summary of progress made, including on the science pages and the Newsroom of the UNFCCC website, and on social media and other online information tools.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), at its fortieth session, noted the information available in the summary report on the availability and visibility of scientific information relevant to the needs of the Convention on the UNFCCC website.[1] The SBSTA requested the secretariat to further enhance the availability and visibility of scientific information, including through social media, the UNFCCC E-Newsletter and the calendar of science events, and by integrating scientific information available on the Internet from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other relevant stakeholders. It requested the secretariat to provide a summary report on that work and to make it available for consideration at SBSTA 42.[2]

B. Scope of the note

2. This document has been prepared in response to the mandate referred to in paragraph 1 above. It draws on the updated information on climate science available on the UNFCCC website, including the science web pages,[3] the UNFCCC Newsroom,[4] and the UNFCCC social media sites on Facebook and Twitter.

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

3. SBSTA 42 may wish to consider the information contained herein as part of its consideration of matters related to research, and to determine any necessary further action.

D. Background

4. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by decision 9/CP.11, requested the SBSTA to regularly consider research needs and systematic observation relating to the Convention in order to inform Parties about the ongoing and planned activities of regional and international climate change research programmes and to communicate Parties' views on research needs and priorities to the scientific community, as necessary.

5. SBSTA 26 agreed to develop and maintain a dialogue between Parties and research programmes and organizations in the context of decision 9/CP.11 (hereinafter referred to as the research dialogue) and invited relevant research programmes and organizations to regularly inform the SBSTA of developments in research activities relevant to the needs of the Convention.[5]

6. SBSTA 30 requested the secretariat to make the presentations given as part of the research dialogue available on the UNFCCC website in such a way that they can be reached by a wide audience.[6] SBSTA 32 also requested the secretariat to consider ways to make

[1] FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.5.
[2] FCCC/SBSTA/2014/2, paragraph 67.
[3] <http://unfccc.int/6990>.
[4] <http://newsroom.unfccc.int>.
[5] FCCC/SBSTA/2007/4, paragraphs 44 and 47.
[6] FCCC/SBSTA/2009/3, paragraph 48.

available on the UNFCCC website information from research programmes and organizations.[7]

7. SBSTA 34 further requested the secretariat, to continue to support the research dialogue, including by enhancing the visibility of scientific information of relevance to the Convention on the UNFCCC website, including the provision of a calendar of key science-policy meetings in collaboration with research programmes and organizations and the IPCC.[8]

8. In addition, SBSTA 35 requested the secretariat, taking into consideration information from relevant research programmes and organizations and the IPCC, to further enhance the availability and visibility of scientific information relevant to the Convention on the UNFCCC website, including through webcasts of the proceedings of any workshops conducted under the research dialogue.[9]

9. SBSTA 38 recalled its conclusions from SBSTA 32, 34 and 35, and noted that the availability and visibility of scientific information relevant to the needs of the Convention on the UNFCCC website has been enhanced.

II. Actions undertaken to enhance the availability and visibility of scientific information relevant to the Convention on the UNFCCC website

10. In response to the request made by the SBSTA referred to in paragraph 1 above, the secretariat undertook actions to develop the web pages of the UNFCCC website in order to improve readability and functionality, as well as access to scientific information. The specific tasks undertaken are described in this section in regard to the science web pages, the UNFCCC Newsroom, social media and other online resources.

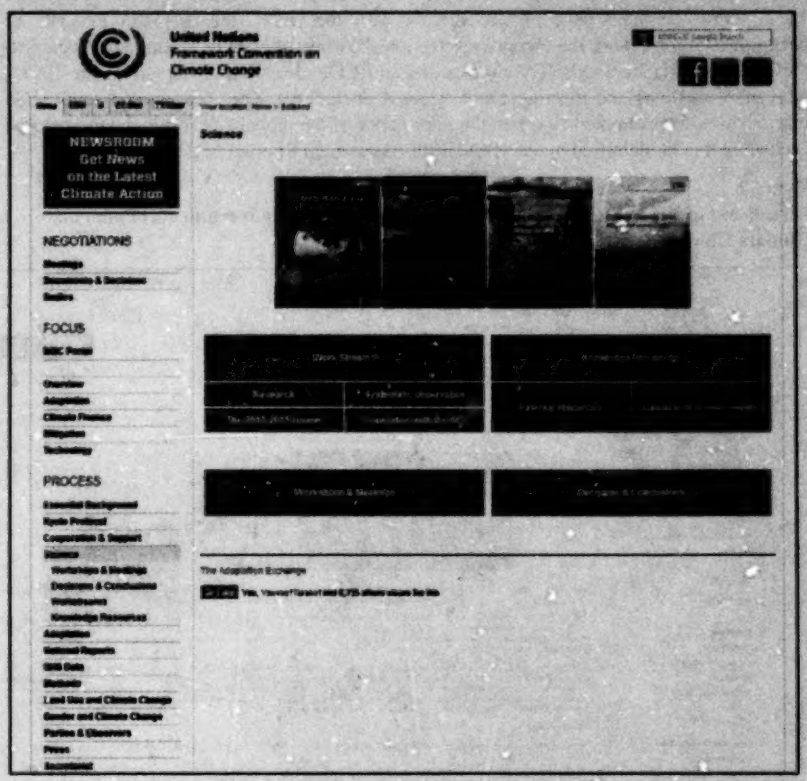
A. Science web pages of the UNFCCC website

11. In 2013, the science web pages underwent a thorough makeover. Science-related web pages that were previously available under the "Adaptation" menu were transferred to their own distinct navigation menu "Science" in the side menu. Furthermore, the pages were regrouped and made consistent, in order to increase visibility, coherence and accessibility.

12. All web pages under the "Science" navigation menu have been fully updated in advance of SBSTA 42 (figure 1).

[7] FCCC/SBSTA/2010/6, paragraph 49(b).
[8] FCCC/SBSTA/2011/2, paragraph 55(b).
[9] FCCC/SBSTA/2011/5, paragraph 42.

Figure 1
Screenshot of the main page on science



Source: <http://unfccc.int/8245>.

1. Workstreams

13. Updates to the science web pages include the provision of information on all previously existing workstreams: research,[10] systematic observation,[11] and the 2013–2015 review.[12] This includes, under the research workstream, updating the research dialogue web pages to clearly show the chronological order of the research dialogues as well as all presentations;[13] and for the 2013–2015 review workstream, regularly updating the structured expert dialogue (SED) web pages[14] to provide detailed descriptions on all four SED meetings, including agendas, presentations, webcasts and summary reports.

14. In November 2014, a fourth workstream was added to the science web pages: cooperation with the IPCC (figure 2).[15] These web pages provide information on the relationship between the UNFCCC and the IPCC, which was previously available in a

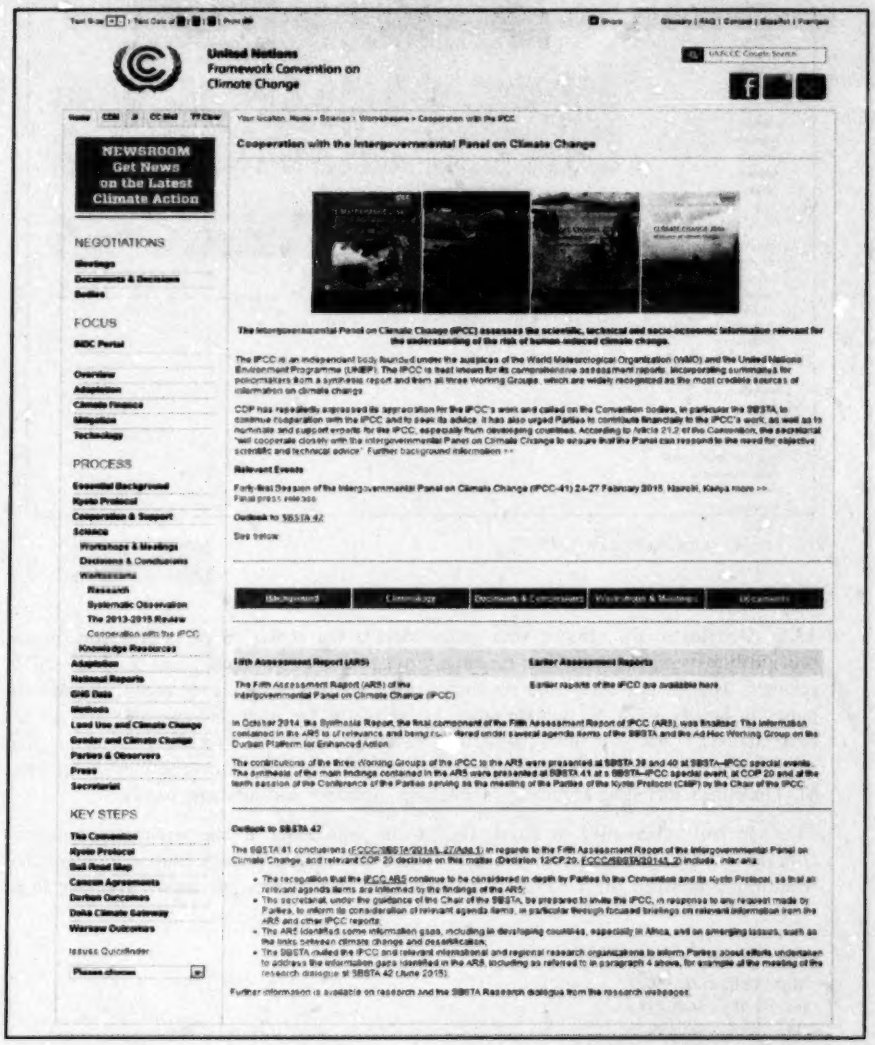
[10] <http://unfccc.int/3461>.
[11] <http://unfccc.int/3462>.
[12] <http://unfccc.int/6998>.
[13] <http://unfccc.int/6793>.
[14] <http://unfccc.int/7521>.
[15] <http://unfccc.int/1077>.

different location on the website, including information relating to consideration by the Parties of the assessment reports of the IPCC.

15. From the main page on cooperation with the IPCC, the user can navigate to background information; the chronology section showing relevant negotiations in regard to the IPCC agenda item; SBSTA conclusions and COP decisions in regard to the IPCC; relevant workshops and meetings; and relevant documents. The web pages also provide infographics, for example to explain the importance of the global 2 °C limit and the risks of exceeding this as identified by the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (AR5).

Figure 2

Screenshot of the main page on cooperation with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

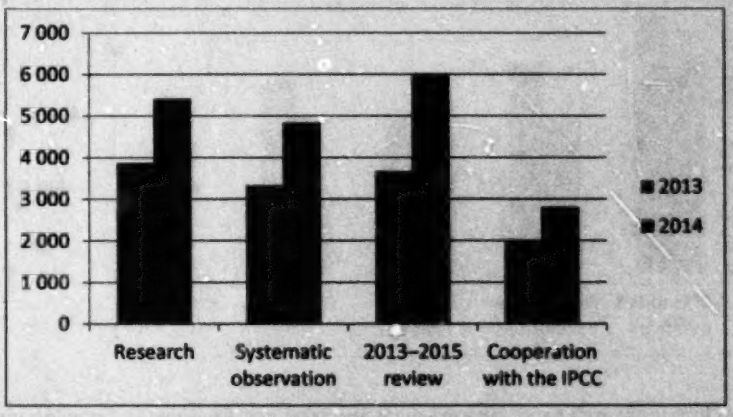


Source: <http://unfccc.int/1077>.

16. The web pages on cooperation with the IPCC include links to: the AR5 and earlier IPCC assessment reports; IPCC outreach and events and the AR5 outreach calendar; the SED; and relevant UNFCCC workshops and meetings. The latter include links to the special event at SBSTA 40 on promoting synergy and strengthening engagement with national, regional and international organizations, centres and networks;[16] the IPCC special event at SBSTA 40 on determining the common metrics to calculate the carbon dioxide (CO_2) equivalence of greenhouse gases;[17] the address to the COP by the IPCC chair at COP 20;[18] and the workshop organized by the Global Climate Observing System in collaboration with the IPCC and UNFCCC on enhancing observations to support preparedness and adaptation in a changing climate, learning from the AR5.[19]

17. The number of hits on the web pages for the four main workstreams (research, systematic observation, the 2013–2015 review and cooperation with the IPCC) was analysed for 2013 and 2014 and is shown in figure 3 and table 1. There was an increase in hits on all science pages between 2013 and 2014.

Figure 3
Number of hits on the science web pages for the four main workstreams in 2013 and 2014



Abbreviation: IPCC = Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Table 1
Number of hits on the science web pages for the four main workstreams in 2013 and 2014, and percentage increase from 2013 to 2014

	2013	*2014*	*Percentage increase*
Research	3 876	5 408	40
Systematic observation	3 328	4 826	45
The 2013–2015 review	3 665	5 960	63
Cooperation with the IPCC	1 999	2 796	40

Abbreviation: IPCC = Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

[16] FCCC/SB/2014/2, paragraph 11.
[17] <http://unfccc.int/8245>.
[18] <http://unfccc6.meta-fusion.com/cop20/events/2014-12-11-15-38-lima-climate-action-high-level-meeting/dr-rajandra-pachauri-chair-ipcc-intergovernmental-panel-on-climate-change>.
[19] <http://unfccc.int/8764>.

2. Decisions and conclusions, workshops and meetings, and knowledge resources

18. The information on new workshops and meetings,[20] and decisions and conclusions under the subsidiary bodies and the COP has been updated.[21]

19. The "Knowledge Resources" section has been updated and expanded.[22] This includes updating the calendar of science events and publishing it in a format to enable the user to see events chronologically by year.[23] The list of external resources has been updated to include not only organizations but also relevant sources of scientific data and information.[24]

20. An analysis of hits on the web pages for workshops and meetings, decisions and conclusions, knowledge resources (external resources and calendar of science events) also shows an increase in hits on all pages between 2013 and 2014 (figure 4 and table 2), with a 122 per cent increase in hits on the calendar.

Figure 4

Number of hits on the web pages for workshops and meetings, decisions and conclusions, external resources, and calendar of science events, in 2013 and 2014

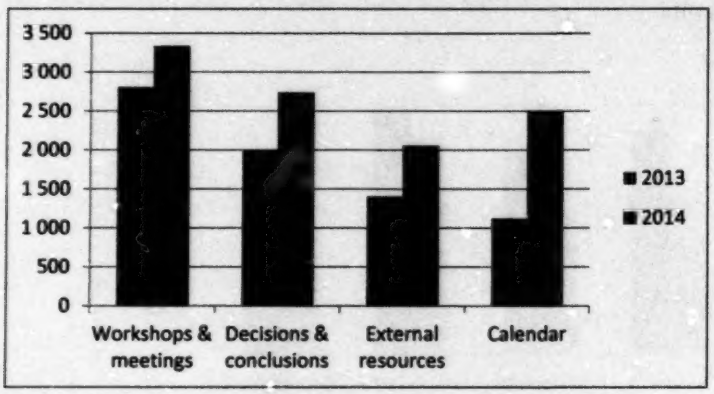


Table 2

Number of hits on the web pages for workshops and meetings, decisions and conclusions, external resources, and calendar of science events, in 2013 and 2014 and percentage increase from 2013 to 2014

	2013	*2014*	*Percentage increase*
Workshops & meetings[a]	2 808	3 331	19
Decisions & conclusions[b]	1 987	2 734	38
External resources[c]	1 405	2 050	46
Calendar of science events[d]	1 123	2 502	123

[a] <http://unfccc.int/7524>.
[b] <http://unfccc.int/3581>.
[c] <http://unfccc.int/7539>.
[d] <http://unfccc.int/6562>.

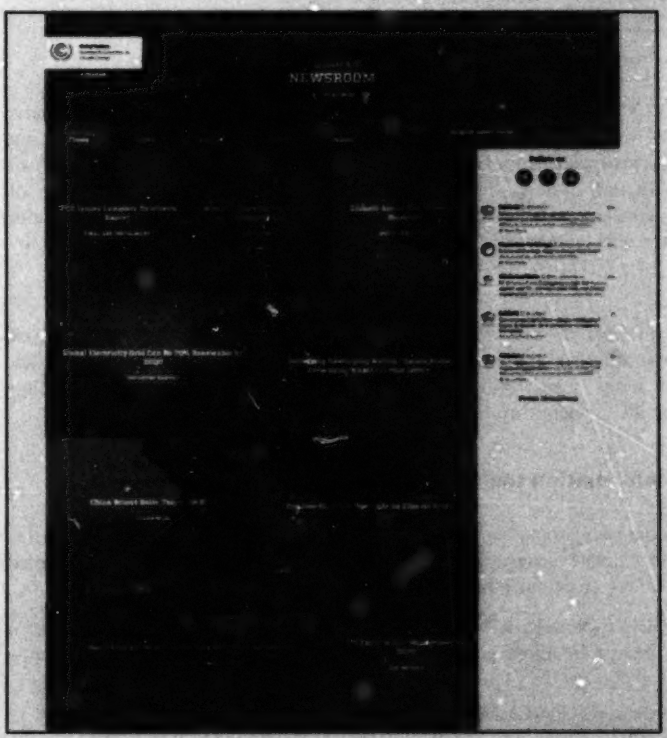
[20] <http://unfccc.int/7524>.
[21] <http://unfccc.int/7559>.
[22] <http://unfccc.int/7530>.
[23] <http://unfccc.int/6562>.
[24] <http://unfccc.int/7539>.

B. UNFCCC Newsroom

21. In August 2014, the UNFCCC secretariat added the "Newsroom" feature to its website,[25] which captures news on climate change and stories about the groundswell of climate action by governments, companies, cities, the United Nations and civil society around the globe. The Newsroom currently features articles under six main headings: "Financial Flows", "Green Urban", "Clean Energy", "Nature's Role", "Action to Adapt" and "Lima to Paris". Science news is a regular feature of the Newsroom, with science articles being published under all six headings, as it is a cross-cutting issue (figure 5).

22. In 2014, about 10 per cent of articles (40 out of approximately 400 articles) published on the Newsroom reflected scientific information relevant to the UNFCCC process. This included articles on the AR5; the World Meteorological Organization; greenhouse gas emissions and global warming; 2 °C of warming and the long-term global goal; carbon and climate neutrality, and negative emissions; extreme weather events and risks of impacts of climate change; climate irreversibility and abrupt changes; science, research and systematic observation; and temperature and sea level rise. The number of page views of the Newsroom in 2014 (as of August when the site was launched) was 1,410,919. The number of hits in 2014 for the 10 articles published related to the IPCC was 4,538.

Figure 5
Screenshot of the UNFCCC Newsroom showing science-related articles



Source: <http://newsroom.unfccc.int>.

[25] <http://newsroom.unfccc.int>.

C. UNFCCC social media

1. Facebook

23. The UNFCCC Adaptation Exchange (figure 6) is set up to stimulate collaboration, sharing and networking on adaptation.[26] The Adaptation Exchange regularly shares posts on developments in climate science.

24. In 2014, approximately 27 per cent of articles covered on the Adaptation Exchange reflected scientific information relevant to the UNFCCC process. In total, 115,000 people saw science-related posts in their newsfeed, corresponding to 36 per cent of the overall Adaptation Exchange reach. The total number of 'likes' for the Adaptation Exchange was 6,739 as of 31 March 2015.

Figure 6
The UNFCCC Adaptation Exchange on Facebook

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/The.Adaptation.Exchange?fref=ts>.

25. The UNFCCC Facebook page shares information relevant to supporting cooperative action by States to combat climate change and its impacts on humanity and ecosystems, and regularly shares posts on developments in climate science. Examples of information on climate science shared through the UNFCCC Facebook page include reporting on atmospheric CO_2 concentrations (posted on 10 September 2014)[27] and on new observation instruments (posted on 5 August 2014).[28]

2. Twitter

26. Relevant information on climate science is included, when appropriate, on the UNFCCC twitter account and the Executive Secretary's twitter account. Examples include the @WMOnews series, which provided national forecasts for 2050 based on possible scenarios from the IPCC scientific projections on climate change.

D. Other online information tools

27. The "essential background" information on science provided by the secretariat, titled "Feeling the Heat: Climate Science and the Basis of the Convention" has been updated since 2014 to include relevant outcomes from the AR5.[29]

28. The UNFCCC E-Newsletter[30] now has a dedicated feature on climate science in each publication, except for those publications dedicated to the Momentum for Change

[26] <https://www.facebook.com/The.Adaptation.Exchange?fref=ts>.
[27] <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48673#.VSZMp-HsQWk>.
[28] <http://1.usa.gov/1olZEw3>.
[29] <http://unfccc.int/6064>.
[30] <http://unfccc.int/3642>.

Initiative. The November 2014 E-Newsletter highlighted the main messages from the AR5. In 2015, the UNFCCC E-Newsletter will continue to reflect the importance of the 2 °C limit, the 2013–2015 review process, the SED and informed policy decision-making based on science.

29. The secretariat also issues press releases on a regular basis, including in relation to significant developments in climate science, which feature prominently on the UNFCCC Newsroom and on the press pages of the UNFCCC website, and are distributed to the UNFCCC secretariat's global media network.[31]

III. Summary

30. The UNFCCC website has had a dedicated section created for science. Scientific information available on the Internet from the IPCC and other relevant stakeholders has been integrated, and the calendar of science events has been improved. A review of the traffic on the science web pages shows that, although the visits to the pages are relatively low, the redesign and updates have, depending on the web page concerned, increased the number of visitors to the page by 19–123 per cent.

31. In 2014 the UNFCCC Newsroom was launched, and includes a relatively high proportion of articles dedicated to or referring to scientific information across a wide range of issues. UNFCCC social media has provided enhanced coverage of scientific issues. Furthermore, the UNFCCC E-Newsletter now includes a section dedicated to science.

32. Given these findings, the availability and visibility of science information on the UNFCCC website can continue to be further enhanced through:

(a) Synergising and linking with relevant work under UNFCCC agenda items and reporting on this work through the web pages and, where relevant, the E-Newsletter and UNFCCC Newsroom;

(b) Strengthening the use of social media;

(c) Publishing relevant information on the UNFCCC Newsroom.

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[31] <http://unfccc.int/2794>.